

VZCZCXR09847
PP RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #1933 2261502
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 141502Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4142
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RHMFIISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 001933

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPKO PREF SOCI US UN AU SU

SUBJECT: DPA IMPLEMENTATION OFFICE OPENS IN KHARTOUM

¶1. Sudanese and international community efforts to achieve peace in Darfur received a boost with the opening of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) Implementation Office in Khartoum on August 12. Signatories to the agreement and the Declaration of Commitment attended, as did representatives of Darfur civil society, the African Union, and the international community. In all, nearly 120 persons were present. A similar DPA implementation office will open in El Fasher within the month.

¶2. Ambassador Sam Ibok, AU Senior Advisor and Head of the African Union DPA Implementation Team, opened the gathering by noting that the inauguration of the DPA office constituted an "act of faith" in both Darfur and the DPA. Furthermore, it was a "testimony of the commitment of the United States" to a lasting peace. The real implementation of the DPA could begin in this new office and it could become a home for every Darfuri. Ambassador Ibok also chastised neighboring states that were supporting non-signatories and encouraged the broader international community to press them to sign on to the DPA.

¶3. Representing the Government of National Unity, Dr. Omar Haroun made the point that no document was perfect, but that the DPA nonetheless represented a substantial step toward peace. Darfur is a region of over one hundred tribes, thus all parties, signatories and international community alike, must work together to construct a durable peace. Dr. Abdul Rahman Moussa spoke on behalf of the signatories of the Declaration of Commitment to the DPA. Minni Minawi, newly-named Senior Assistant to the President and Chair of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority, represented the Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM), though he acknowledged he was now part of the government. Minawi thanked the U.S. for its efforts to both broker the agreement in Abuja and bolster its implementation via this office. He specifically thanked Dr. Moussa for his courage in joining the agreement and encouraged others to sign. Minawi spoke at length about the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission (D-JAM), the World Bank-led evaluation of the long-term needs for recovery, reconstruction, and development in Darfur. A comprehensive plan was required to enable refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their villages and resume their lives. Minawi stated several times that he wanted to be inclusive, that for the DPA to succeed all had to join, and that he was willing to help facilitate this.

¶4. CDA Hume closed the ceremony by stressing the dire humanitarian considerations of the crisis in Darfur and the imperative for all parties to shoulder responsibility for the implementation of the agreement. He also congratulated the signatories for the personal risks each had assumed in signing the agreement. CDA Hume's remarks were reported extensively and favorably on the front page of the English language daily Khartoum Monitor. The English language Sudan Vision also carried a front page photo of the ribbon cutting ceremony. The event was not covered in the Arabic language press, however, as of yet.

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